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## A PRACTICAL DIPLOMACY

BY EDWARD W. TOWNSEND,

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After the first performance of Sardou's political satire "Rabagas" at the Vaudeville theatre in Paris in 1872, President Thiers ordered the governor of Paris to forbid a second performance.

I wish that after the first performance of Sardou's romantic drama "Dora" at Wallack's theatre in New York in April, 1878, where it was given its American name of "Diplomacy," that the then mayor of New York had ordered its immediate suppression. I am soberly convinced that if the police powers of New York had been exercised for the immediate suppression of that play, it would be less difficult now to discover the elements of a constructive American foreign policy.

If some of you wonder what I have said has to do with the subject upon which I have been asked to address you, I hasten to explain: not many weeks ago an artist friend of mine in New York who had found profitable occupation in drawing caricature illustrations of the tango, drew the figure of a young woman so distorted, that it was a caricature of his own caricatures. Acting upon a happy inspiration, he gave the drawing the title of the "Debutante Slouch" and thus it was reproduced in a popular illustrated weekly. Today a million young American women are trying to copy that illustration in their own walk and carriage and those who have an unusually supple backbone, and are highly gifted with the power of imitation, are succeeding, to the delighted surprise of observers.

You see at once now the quarrel I have with Victorien Sardou's play "Diplomacy."

Jerome A. Hart, in one of his entertaining books, gives us a lively and comprehensive account of the plays of Sardou, and speaking of a woman character in the play, he says this of her: "This young lady is a unique and fascinating person, beautiful, elegant, seductive as a fairy princess."

Dora, you may recall, was unconsciously enlisted into the group of women who, Sardou would have us suppose, exist in all the large

European capitals, and act as secret agents for diplomats. Mr. Hart gives testimony to his belief that such groups actually exist, and are not the creation of M. Sardou's lively imagination, and says of them: "These ladies wear gorgeous gowns, and resemble Solomon's lilies in the other respect that they toil not; but they excel at writing letters, which letters pay the cost of their gorgeous gowns. Their perfumed correspondence is filled with gossip, political and other, and it amuses foreign statesmen even when it does not instruct them."

I shudder as I pause to ask if Mr. Hart unconsciously suggests here one of the reasons why only the very rich may play "Diplomacy" for us in foreign capitals? But that is somewhat aside from my main purpose in introducing M. Sardou into this very respectable company. Sardou is not the only offender, but he came conveniently into my mind as a type. Other romance writers have entranced their readers by drawing, if I may be permitted to phrase it in this way, the "Debutante Slouch." The creators of this burlesque diplomacy have been amazed, as my artist friend was at the result of his work, to find their fanciful creations laboriously copied; to find that nature, in fact, imitates art. Sardou and his fellow offenders have created a picture of diplomacy wherein we see lovely and mysterious women gorgeously gowned seducing from incautious diplomats, secrets for the information of other diplomats; a picture of subtle intrigue, of masterful intellect gaining advantage by processes allied to wizardry; of vast and complicated affairs determined at secret meetings, the result of which at times is announced by the sudden boom of artillery, the thundering charge of cavalry. This is the romance picture of diplomacy which excites the ambition of excellent heads of families to desert their homes and their comfortable clubs, and their golf links, to enter upon this delightful occupation, thinking to become "Baron Steins," to commune with beves of "Doras," to control the destinies of nations, to impart to startled secretaries of state code messages carrying delightful information derived from scented correspondence. That is why M. Sardou's play and like output from other romance, lie under the disadvantage of my severe disapprobation.

To be sure there is a somewhat more real though scarcely more admirable attraction to the very wealthy in the prospect of representing our country in foreign courts. They will have there opportunity to dine with nobility, even at times with royalty, they will be seen

at the shooting boxes of dukes, at the race course with earls, at the clubs with baronets and on the streets with men of fashion.

In nothing which I have said do I intend to indicate disapproval of the custom practised by many administrations, of more than one political faith, of making appointments to the large places in the diplomatic service of rich men, because they are rich men. I am willing to admit that almost any rich man who made his own money, if he obey instruction such as I shall presently indicate, would be as capable as one less favored by fortune of carrying on, as a diplomat, the business of our foreign relations; but it distresses me greatly that this air of romance, of unreality, should have enveloped this very practical business.

There should be no illusion about it, and the incentive to engage in the business should be only a desire to do a public service in a very straightforward and simple manner. I do not mean that there are not certain qualifications for the office not usually possessed by men who have been industriously engaged accumulating a fortune, but I have a scheme to overcome the difficulty arising from that lack of special knowledge. There is, for instance, the great difficulty of knowing exactly how to address members of the diplomatic corps. In my own three years' experience on the foreign affairs committee of the House of Representatives, I have had the customary opportunities offered to the members of that committee, of meeting not infrequently, members of the diplomatic corps in Washington and the ladies of their households. I have found the men very human beings, interested deeply in trap shooting, golf, baseball, the price of beef and the difficulty of securing a lower berth. The ladies are all of them charming and affable. But I began to enjoy this highly enviable opportunity too late in life successfully to school myself in one of these special qualifications I have referred to; I do not know today, and sadly confess that I never expect to know, what rank in diplomacy entitles a man to be addressed as "Your Highness," and what rank as "Your Excellency." Unlimited study gives one a certain steadiness of voice in the matter of addressing by the more familiar titles, that is, those of nobility with which an early reading of Bulwer familiarizes one.

There is another difficulty of a more serious nature, concerning this special requirement that I have spoken of, one that somewhat handicaps our system of appointment as it is practised at present, but which

under my improvement will be also happily overcome. It is the matter of speechmaking by our diplomats. For this embarrassing problem I have a happy solution. When a representative in Congress finds in his morning's mail, 20 letters asking for precisely the same information, the congressman does not dictate 20 different forms of reply, but indicates a form already in use, or, if the matter is new, dictates a form to cover the whole 20 requests. This system could readily be applied in the matter of diplomatic speeches. One appointed to be ambassador to the Court of St. James, let us say, going to Washington to receive his instructions, could be supplied with a set of forms; form A to be used at the dedication of a new monument to Robert Burns; form B to be used if the admirers of Wordsworth are to unveil a bust of their favorite poet; form C the opening of a new Anglo-American Club in London. It is unnecessary further to unfold this scheme. It readily unfolds itself to any practical mind. To be sure the unexpected is always happening. But even in such an event I would have the situation handled with caution and according to instructions received by the diplomat. If, for instance, a society is placing a tablet in honor of George Bernard Shaw, and should invite our diplomat to submit a few remarks upon that interesting occasion, and his index failed to disclose an appointed form, the appropriation allowed him by my committee for incidental expenses would enable him to cable news of the exciting event to the secretary of state, and receive an approved speech by cable in ample time for its delivery.

To deviate a moment from the sober and orderly course of my remarks, what, I ask, could be more solemnly whimsical than an expression of the opinion of the present secretary of state, on the life and writings of George Bernard Shaw? Unless, indeed it might be a whimsically solemn review by Mr. Shaw of the diplomatic excellencies of the present secretary of state of the United States.

Now to my panacea: there are in the department of state in Washington, a score, probably many more than that number, of men who have received years of training there. They are linguists and highly skilled in the details, the precedents and the history of our foreign relations—the kind of men foreign nations appoint to diplomatic posts—but incapable of making large campaign contributions; these are without prospect of being sent by us to occupy diplomatic posts at important capitals. We should provide a new position in each American embassy; that of assistant ambassador, and to these places

should be appointed men such as I have described, and thus by the presence of such a man at each embassy, the ambassador will be given freedom solely to enjoy social delights, except upon such occasions when he might be required to deliver an address relating to form A, B or C, which form would be deftly selected for him and filled in where blank spaces as to the name and occupation of the person whose memory was to be celebrated, required. This assistant diplomat could perform the simple duties of the office, such as conveying to the government to which his chief was accredited the information his own government wished to be conveyed, and receive from that government the information it wished to convey to Washington, and diligently devote the rest of his time to discovering means of increasing our foreign commerce. Having been trained in his business, this assistant ambassador would know what he was in a foreign capital for, he would be under no illusions as to "Doras," he would know that there was no hocus-pocus, no sharp card tricks, no foolery whatever of any kind about this business of maintaining proper and profitable foreign relations between the countries whence he came, and to which his superior officer was accredited. He would know that M. Sardou was just as much a joker as is Mr. Ibsen, and that the play of "Diplomacy" is no more like the thing diplomacy than "A Doll's House" is like anything that really ever existed.

If these thoughtful remarks have not indicated to you precisely what in my opinion should constitute the elements of a constructive American foreign policy, they have been made in vain. From the time when, in March, 1776, the Continental Congress named Silas Deane as its diplomatic agent to France until this year of grace 1914, the end and aim of our foreign relations have been to extend our commerce. I do not say that this aim has been held true at all times, but I lay it down as a general proposition, that friendly relations being assumed, there is little else involved in foreign relations and certainly nothing else comparable in importance, to the business of extending the commerce of this country.

The importance of our commerce, in every consideration of our foreign policy, even in the earliest times when that policy was being developed, is suggested by Professor Moore, whose absence from the state department at this moment I deeply regret. In his *One Hundred Years of American Diplomacy*, he speaks of the 14 treaties entered into between the United States and the European nations early in our

national life, and refers to their wide range of subjects, among them commercial intercourse, and in one instance the agreement that "If difference should arise in consequence of our infraction of the treaties, no appeal shall be made to arms till a friendly arrangement shall have been proposed and rejected." Our author comments: "These clauses were far in advance of the international law of the time. They represent an aspiration; but, if intended as a prophecy, they yet remain for the most part unverified and unfulfilled, though they are by no means discredited."

I know that statistics make dull matter for an address, but I can not refrain from using a few figures to emphasize my contention that our foreign policy should be more largely directed to securing foreign commerce.

The total Latin-American foreign commerce for the year 1912 was twenty-eight hundred million dollars, of which our share was eight hundred millions, with a balance against us, however, of two hundred millions,—a fair percentage of commerce for us, although the balance against us remains a serious drain. The figures for the A B C group, Argentina, Brazil and Chile, are far from satisfactory, a fact due in part, certainly, to our lack of a constructive policy toward the A B C group, which, if adopted, would result in a much better trade showing. The total foreign commerce for Brazil, for 1912, was six hundred and seventy million dollars, of which our share was one hundred and ninety millions, with a balance against us of fifty-three millions. Great Britain had a balance in her favor of thirty-four millions in her share of Brazil's commerce for the same year. Only one more illustration by statistics: Chile's total commerce for 1912 was two hundred and sixty-one millions, of which our share was forty-one millions, with a balance against us of eight millions.

In those three great countries, of trade potentialities beyond computation, we have an embassy in Brazil only. There are bills pending to raise Argentina's legation to an embassy, but the administration has not yet made a recommendation that we should pay a similar deserved compliment to Chile, although peculiar reasons exist why Chile should be so complimented. It seems to me that our state department should adopt as a policy toward the A B C group an attitude of special cordiality, which should have as its most significant expression our friendly recognition of the great importance those powers have achieved in the family of nations; of our sincere pleasure in

their splendid civilization, their high advancement in art, letters and science. They should be made to know and feel that they are to share with us the responsibilities, the burdens and privileges of western hemisphere guardianship. Our exchange of commerce, of friendly intercourse through travel is startlingly short of what it should be; and for a remedy we must look to a foreign policy giving greater and well deserved recognition to those three great and splendid nations.

Commerce promotes peace as surely as peace promotes commerce. But what I shall say upon this subject now is upon the assumption that we shall remain at peace with the great nations of the earth, through the simple expedient of minding our own business and making the great part of that business the securing of foreign trade as a means of extending our domestic industries. Granting me that assumption, I now reveal what most profoundly lies in my mind on this subject. It seems to me that no student of our present economic and social conditions, even one giving but casual study to those subjects, can fail to see the vital necessity of providing more employment at more wages if we wish our country good health. There are symptoms plain to the senses, that a distemper threatens our social body. Some once looked about and denied that such symptoms were visible. Today only the fool will make such denial. More employment and better wages must be provided if we would have the threatening symptoms disappear—the fever subside. As an essential means for bringing about such subsidence there must come, as speedily as may be, a vast increase in our foreign commerce, a vast increase of foreign consumption of our manufactures. The radicalism, so plainly discerned in groups of all the three parties contending for the political control of the government, is born of a perception of this need. It seems at times as if this radical energy was misdirected to attain the desired big end. We cannot, solely by legislation, increase employment, increase wages or decrease the hours of labor, yet this is being constantly attempted. Manufacturers will not produce more than they can profitably sell, they cannot give more than a certain share of their product in wages, or else they starve themselves. The radicals see the symptoms and, in part at least, attempt their cure. Under-employment and under-pay are not caused by the symptoms of idleness and unfair conditions of living. Yet we see the attempt persisted in to cure those things by legislation, which in no degree whatever can, nor does it even seek to increase the demand for labor-



ers and increase the share of the product which capital can give to labor. The remedy it seems clear to me is expansion of our foreign trade, a great increase of foreign use or consumption of our productions; and that I would have brought about largely by the work of our diplomats in carrying out our foreign policy.

Probably the men attracted from idle lives at home by the fascination of a Sardou picture of "Diplomacy," would be of but small aid in furthering a policy which seeks to better domestic conditions by increasing our foreign trade. If it has become a political necessity that such men should hold such offices, then the remedy I suggested, half in jest a moment ago, might be seriously considered. Let us, if it seems expedient that we should do so, treat the office of ambassador as purely ornamental, an offering to one whose gifts to party entitle him to a reward. But let us reform our embassies by placing in each of them a practical man, trained in intercourse with foreigners, trained to know which of our productions the country he is accredited to might use or consume, trained to know that diplomacy is not a romance but a business, and perhaps in that way we may supply at least the elements of a constructive American foreign policy.